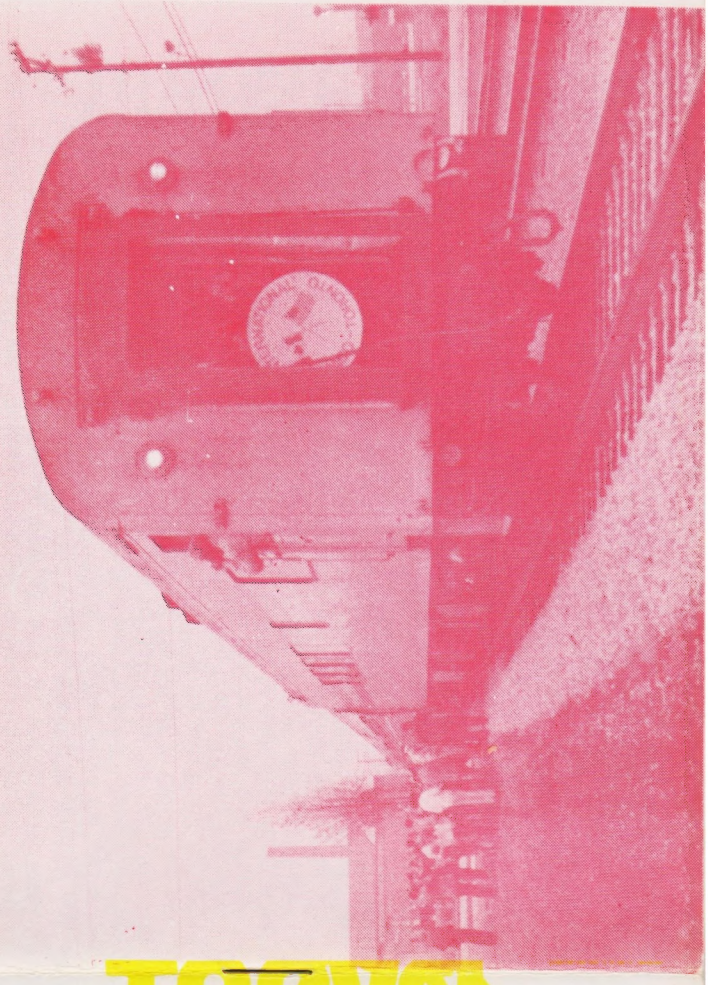
80¢
VOL. 12 NO. 20
NOVEMBER 1982
ISSUE NO. 256

RAIL TRAVEL NEWS



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80¢
VOL. 11 NO. 17
OCTOBER 1981
ISSUE NO. 232

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The SILVER STAR was speeded up by half an hour each way, and the SILVER METEOR gained 3/4 hour southbound and half an hour northbound in the Oct 31 schedule changes.

The only time that the SILVER METEOR ran a faster schedule under Amtrak was in 1972 when it ran a more limited schedule and bypassed the old Jacksonville station.

The present SILVER STAR schedule was exceeded only in 1973 when it ran via Ocala FL instead of via Orlando.

Compared to the worst of the bad old days of the SDP40's, SILVER STAR is now 2:20 faster, and SILVER METEOR is now 1:50 faster southbound to Miami.

Robert T. Clark
Sanford, Florida

I would like to comment on a letter from Jim Crowl in RTN 254 in which he asks about "sold out" conditions on the RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. I experienced the same problem in September when I tried to make a reservation for a midweek October departure of RGZ. Making my reservation thru Amtrak, I was initially told the train was sold out. However, the agent in San Francisco telephoned Rio Grande in Denver and was told that space was available, so I was sold a ticket. While aboard the train, other passengers were saying that they too were told the train was sold out when they tried to make a reservation. The conductor said that this was done because of a lot of last minute ticket buyers and that no one who showed up at the station had ever been left behind. Whether or not this is true, I don't know, but many people were at the Rio Grande window that morning, buying tickets, and as far as I know they all got on. There was a sizable crowd aboard RGZ that day, but it was not sold out, and west of Glenwood Springs there were many more seats vacant than occupied.

I'm not sure what Rio Grande's intentions are with the blanket "sold out" policy, but if they don't want to bother with reservations, why not just make RGZ a non-reserved train? To continue what they're doing will surely discourage future patronage and eventually lead to the train's demise.

Michael Gondron
Morgan Hill, California

Rail Travel News, Vol. 12, No. 20. November, 1982. Whole number 256.
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Published twice monthly by Message Media, P. O. Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709. Subscription $19.00 per year; single copy 80¢. Overseas and institutional rates on request. STAFF: James Russell, Editor. Paul Rayton, Editor-at-Large. Regional Correspondents: Peter Putnam Bretz, Southern California; Jack Ferry, Illinois; Adron Hall, Mississippi; Kenneth Maylath, Maryland; Peter Roehm, Massachusetts.

ON THE COVER

The first northbound run of the INTERNATIONAL on Oct 31. Here the train is at Battle Creek, Michigan, and the rear view shows the drumhead of the train, with crossed Canadian and American flags, on the rear of Amtrak press car 3103. The complete story of the inaugural runs appeared in RTN's last issue. Photo by Duane W. Roller.

I much enjoyed Walt Stringer's article in RTN 254, "Riding the Metroliners and Rail Transit Cars of Philadelphia", especially since I just recently returned myself from a "railfanning" trip to Philly. I think, however, I can offer a few minor additions and corrections.

I believe the new Kawasaki cars on the Broad St. subway went into service on Sep 8, but were then to be modified after an in-service teething period. I did not see any in service, altho I did see a couple in Fern Rock yards. As predicted, the Red Arrow Media and Sharon Hill lines were being served exclusively by the new Kawasaki trolleys in early November. Both the "Bullet" and "Strafford" cars on the Norristown line are being repainted in the SEPTA color scheme.

The Route 23 trolleys are still operating--at least they were on Nov 2, when I rode one from one end of the line to the other. I can highly recommend this ride to anyone who is interested in seeing a good cross-section of the city of Philadelphia, and doesn't mind sitting in a trolley car for an hour and 20 minutes. The northern terminus at Chestnut Hill can also be reached by commuter trains from either Penn Center or Reading Terminal, and the southern terminus in South Philly is not far from the Broad St. subway.

I am not sure of the status of the Route 50 trolley line, but I know that Routes 56 and 60 in North Philly were converted to buses several years ago due to a shortage of PCC cars. To my knowledge they are still bus-operated and I understand there is some fear that the trolleys may never return.

I spent one rush hour at North Broad St. on the ex-RDG commuter lines, and another at the 30th St. suburban platforms of the ex-PC. I noted that only about 50% of the ex-RDG Silverliner IVs were in service, the result being that more of the old "Blueliners" (refurbished MUs of 1930s vintage) were operating, albeit mostly in rush hours (4 consists, as against only one or two a year ago). On the ex-Pennsy lines, most of the Budd Silverliners, including at least three of the original Pioneer IIIs, are in fact still operating, altho mostly on rush hour runs. Most non-rush hour runs on both the ex-PC and ex-RDG use Silverliner IVs, usually in one or two-car consists. I saw no trace of any of the ex-PRR MP-54s.

One line that Mr. Stringer did not mention is the Fox Chase-Newtown "rapid transit line." This was originally part of the Reading commuter rail network, but a year ago SEPTA took over direct operation of it, using employees transferred from the Broad St. subway. (It is now their route HS-1.) Two 2-car consists of ex-Reading RDCs are used and I saw four more RDCs laid up at Newtown, and another two on a siding at Southampton. It traverses mostly wooded countryside and is very pretty, especially in fall foliage season (assuming you can find a clean window to look out!). It is also very lightly patronized; on the midday run from Fox Chase to Newtown there were four passengers, on the return trip 2!

One final point of clarification on Mr. Stringer's "Metroliner" rides. The first, from Ardmore to Philly, was on one of the "Metroliner" MU cars, which are

now used only from Harrisburg to Philly and New York. They are not billed in Amtrak's timetable as "Metroliner Service" (Harrisburg-NY trains have names, Harrisburg-Philly are called "Keystone Service.") His second ride from Philly to Washington was aboard one of the extra-fare "Metroliner Service" trains, now operated by AEM-7s and Amfleet cars.

Once again, I'd like to thank Mr. Stringer for an excellent article, and I highly recommend Philadelphia as a place to visit for anyone interested in railroads (especially electric railroads) and rail transit. For the sheer variety it can't be beaten!

Andrew W. King
New York, New York

Mr. Stringer is accurate in stating that RDC's are "long gone" on the RDG-CNJ Philadelphia-Newark route. Cross-platform commuter service (one train Mon-Fri in each direction) will continue, however, thru Dec 3.

Just to update Mr. Stringer's report on Philadelphia transit activities: SEPTA Route 23, the marathon streetcar line, has seen trolley service since September.

Christopher Anderson
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ADMINISTRATION WANTS 5-CENT GASOLINE TAX INCREASE TO PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

President Reagan has called back Congress for a lame-duck session beginning Nov 29, and in the few weeks given them, legislators may pass a 5-cent per gallon Federal gasoline tax increase bill that is being pushed by the Administration. DOT Secretary Lewis wanted the increase last year, but Reagan opposed it at that time. Now there seems no other way to fund highway repairs and other transportation needs. Of the tax that would be raised, 20% would go to public transit. The bill seems to have major bipartisan support in Congress.

The bill would raise about $5.5 billion per year. Besides raising gasoline and diesel fuel taxes, the measure would remove taxes for passenger car tires and increase them for large truck tires. Taxes on inner tubes and oil would be eliminated. For large trucks, there would be a new 12% tax on truck parts and on new truck sales. The taxes would go into effect on Apr 1, 1983.

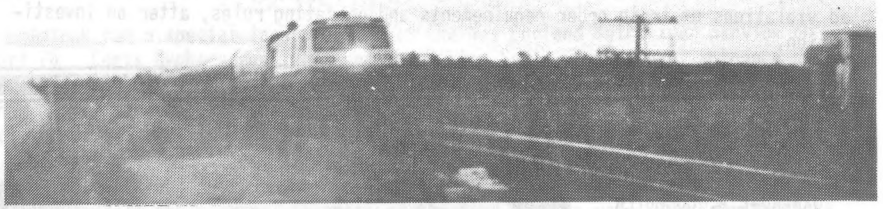
Rail supporters were concerned that not enough of the tax money would go into rail needs. NARP said that Congressman Florio was attempting to modify the bill to allow Amtrak to be eligible for some of the 20% mass transit money. NARP was asking rail supporters to contact their legislators promptly and tell them that Florio's plan should be supported (such contact should be made by telephone at this time, since the session of Congress will last only until Dec 15 and legislators plan to move quickly). (The Capitol switchboard number is 202-224-3121, which connects to all offices.) NARP said that one provision of the bill may be of benefit to Amtrak: $25 million would be set aside yearly for the next four years for repair of about one-third of the highway bridges over the NE Corridor--bridges that Amtrak often gets stuck with repairing because nobody claims them.

One large problem with the bill is that federal operating subsidies for mass transit would be phased out by the end of fiscal year 1984. Also, truckers with very large trucks would be given much more freedom to use their rigs on many highways, and some environmental restraints on highways in wilderness areas would be eased.

The bill is in part to provide more jobs and ease unemployment. Democrats still plan to bring up another bill to provide more jobs, but it might not be passed by the end of the lame-duck session.

THE PANIC BOX does not appear this issue. It will appear again next issue. News in this issue is updated thru Nov 30, 1982.

RAIL CANADA



THE ABOVE PHOTO, notes photographer Robert P. Langlois of Montreal, is of a "not uncommon sight" in recent months--an LRC engine pulling conventional equipment rather than LRC cars, on a VIA train. The train is #37, Montreal-Ottawa, and it was photographed near Coteau, Quebec. The first car is the club car.

A SEATTLE READER points out the lack of connection between the CANADIAN's Capreol section and the Algoma Central train at Nakina, Ont. The CANADIAN section crosses Ontario only on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, while the AC train 272 leaves Nakina only on Sunday, Wednesday and Friday. Is someone deliberately trying to discourage patronage of the Algoma Central?

JOINING TRANSPORT 2000 is possible even if you don't live in Canada--in answer to a question. T-2000 is the consumer advocate group in Canada that's similar to NARP in the U.S. Individual membership is $15 per year, or $50 for (non-profit) affiliate membership. T-2000's address is Box/CP 858, Station B, Ottawa, Ont., K1P 5P9, Canada. Membership includes a subscription to Transport Action, now edited by George Pandy of Ottawa, the author of "Travel Guide Europe."

SECOND-GENERATION LRC train is being studied, reports a Nov 8 Globe & Mail article. According to the report, an electric LRC is also being considered for the future, when the Toronto-Montreal route is electrified. Also, a bi-level LRC coach design is under consideration for transcontinental service. In the meantime, VIA hopes to get 20 LRC trains in revenue service, with all the bugs eliminated, by 1985.

OCTOBER 31 CHANGES included increased frequency on the Calgary-South Edmonton route, with trains 195/196 running daily rather than daily except Saturday. No. 195 leaves Calgary 30mins later, making better connections off the westbound CANADIAN. The daily service provides connections at Edmonton with the SKEENA on a tri-weekly rather than only bi-weekly basis. Negotiations are reportedly underway to move train service to downtown Edmonton instead of South Edmonton, altho Greyhound is objecting to the more effective competition this plan would offer.

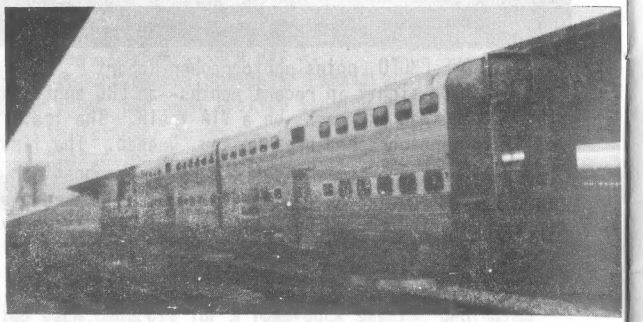
BRITISH COLUMBIA RAILWAY and VIA Rail, as of Oct 31, coordinated their existing services to allow travel from Edmonton to North Vancouver via Jasper and Prince George. As T-2000 notes, however, the connection is designed for the hard-core rail travel enthusiast--but is better than nothing. The main problem to development of the route is the early morning or late night transfer in Prince George, between stations 8 km apart. Initial reports suggest that BCR did all the adjusting and compromising, with VIA confining its effort to allowing thru ticketing. The BCR route offers some spectacular scenery, so there is reason for anyone to make this trip at least once. Unfortunately, as T-2000 notes, without a common station operation in Prince George, and with other flaws, the service will tend to attract only those one-time trippers.

CHRISTMAS HOLIDAY SEASON will see supplemental train service in the Atlantic region. The CHALEUR, #16/17 Montreal-Gaspe, and second section of the OCEAN, #114/115 Montreal-Halifax, will operate on dates not yet known as we go to press.

VANCOUVER ISLAND SERVICE is again in jeopardy. Costs are rising and ridership has been declining. Provincial funding may be required to retain or upgrade the service.

SARNIA-TORONTO TRAIN headon collision with a CN freight at Ingersoll, Ont., on Aug 10, reported in RTN 251, resulted in five CN employees being fired for alleged violations of train order requirements and operating rules, after an investigation.

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT



OXNARD-L.A. COMMUTER trains have seen a lot of activity this month. Much of it has been in equipment changes. The trains, which began operation on Oct 18 and are funded by Caltrans (see RTN 254) began by using P30 engines and Amfleet cars leased from Amtrak. Then after the SAN DIEGAN fire of Oct 28 (see RTN 254) and possibly the need for extra Amfleet cars elsewhere for the Thanksgiving rush, Amtrak substituted Hi-level cars--three-car consists with P30 locomotives. Then bi-level Chicago RTA gallery cars finally arrived, and Caltrans put them into use on Nov 16, on the two evening runs from L.A. The first southbound run of the cars is shown in the photo above (photo by James Washington): train 102 at L.A. with P30 engine 711 and gallery cars 7286 and 7316. (The second trainset had P30 #704 and gallery cars 7309 and 7314.) The RTA cars are run in sets of two, with two other cars as backup spares. Then the SP announced that it would remove the P30 locomotives from service on the trains on Nov 29 in order to test them for possible problems that might cause derailments. On Nov 24 the second train of the day had a minor derailment at Montalvo, putting two cars off the tracks, with no injuries. Caltrans had to call in an F40 engine (and Amfleet cars, apparently) to fill in for the out-of-service trainset. On Nov 26 (no trains run on Thanksgiving, the 25th) the F40 set and one P30 + RTA set operated, except in the evening, when only the F40 set ran. When the P30 removal was announced, Caltrans arranged to obtain SP freight engines and commute cars from the San Francisco Peninsula for the Oxnard run, and these evidently began operation on Nov 29. They run without heat, but Caltrans cannot use the RTA cars without HEP engines or there are no lights. SP claimed there were five derailments in recent weeks of the P30 engines on the SUNSET and the Oxnard trains. During the Thanksgiving holiday there was a minor P30 derailment on the SUNSET at El paso, Amtrak said. Caltrans blamed SP for attempting to derail the commuter service, which it is opposed to, by removing the GE-built locomotives. Caltrans is pleased with the steadily-increasing ridership of the commuter trains, which was running recently at approximately 95 per train. There have been some favorable articles in Southern California newspapers about the comfort and convenience of the service. But Caltrans said the ridership won't increase much until new stations are built. Work began on Nov 15 on stations at Chatsworth and Burbank Airport. The latter station will be located directly in front of the Lockheed plant gate no. 4. Four other stations are to be built later. All are to be ready by next February. The Burbank station will located directly north of the former Burbank SP station.

(continued on page 9)

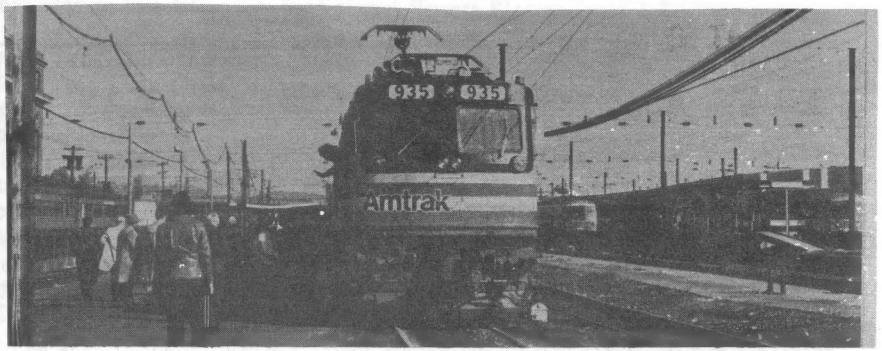
INAUGURAL RUN OF THE NEW ENGLAND EXPRESS METROLINER

by Kevin J. Gregoire

Amtrak ran a special inaugural run of the New England Metroliner Service on Oct 28. Chris Cyphers and I entered the Boston South Station west entrance and proceeded to a boarding table where we picked up our pre-assigned press kits, name tags, souvenir buttons, key chains, personalized invitations and a free copy of the Official Railway Guide.

We were assigned to car #1 of the train, which consisted of two F40 locomotives, an Amfleet II food service car, and three Amfleet I 60-seat coaches. A high school band played on the platform in front of the food service car. Two Providence TV stations videotaped the event.

Promptly at 9:20am we pulled out of the station and proceeded directly south over the bridge onto the old Midlands Branch of the New Haven, crossing over the Central Artery into Roxbury near Massachusetts Avenue. The P.A. system announced the first seating for breakfast, so we moved to the dining section at the head of the new Amfleet II food service car. The eight 4-seat tables had beige linen tablecloths and napkins, stainless steel tableware, water pitcher, glass salt and pepper shakers, a sugar bowl and a silk flower, all of which glowed in the bright sunlight of a perfect Indian summer day.



The inaugural train gets its power changed to an AEM-7 electric loco, no. 935, at New Haven. At far left are seen stored ex-NH "Washboard" MU cars, and Con-M-2 "Cosmopolitans" at right on hi-level platform. Photos by Chris Cyphers.

We sat down going thru Uphans Corner station, a stop established and soon abandoned by the MBTA for its commuter rail trains when the branch opened a few years ago, due to lack of patronage. Chris and I were joined by a woman whose husband owns the Cape Cod and Hyannis Railroad. A few minutes later, Frank Coletta of WJAR-TV channel 10 of Providence joined us and asked me if he could videotape an interview with me for the evening news. He started rolling the tape as we passed Morton Street station in Dorchester (another abandoned MBTA commuter rail station) until we paused at Route 128 Amtrak station, where he stopped the interview as he wanted scenery moving by in the background, then continued until we reached Attleboro on the Rhode Island state line. How much of the 15-min interview made the news I'll never know, as I cannot receive that station on our local cable TV.

A set of MBTA Pullman Standard push-pull commuter coaches waited as we passed Attleboro. The TV interview done, I finally began to eat breakfast. The one entree consisted of fruit cup, cheese omelet, sausage links, ham and hash brown potatoes.

Our speed over the branch seemed to be about 80mph, but once on the main line past Route 128 thru Attleboro reached 100mph on the all-welded rail concrete tie roadbed. We were early into Providence, where we jumped off the train and almost literally bumped into U.S. Senator Claiborne Pell, whom Amtrak's Clark Tyler escorted quickly thru the train. On the platform we met NARP Director Roy Poulsen of Kingston. Roy boarded and ordered breakfast as we pulled out of Providence on time at 10:07am.

East or south of Providence, if you sit on the left hand side of the train, you begin to encounter the spectacular views of the Atlantic Ocean, or more specifically Long Island Sound. We passed the Amtrak stations at Kingston and Westerly. Meanwhile, Amtrak had broken out the champagne to celebrate its new service.

NARP's Barry Williams was on the rear platform examining the track work and some potential bridge replacements. We flew along quickly, soon passing the ornate restored rail passenger station at New London. We arrived at New Haven early for our engine change. Getting off here, we watched our F40s uncouple and an AEM-7 electric locomotive couple on--a move which took less than five minutes.

Author/photographer Tom Nelligan boarded and we left New Haven on time at noon. The ex-New Haven commuter stops whizzed past as we were on the express track of the 4-track main line. We slowed for the long curve at the old Bridgeport station, then passed the modern new structure of concrete just west of it. At South Norwalk we slowed again for the curve at Berk tower, where the old Berkshire line of the New Haven goes north to Danbury and Pittsfield. Connecticut SPV-2000 #50 was waiting for an eastbound commuter train before leaving for its journey to Danbury.

The inaugural train is still powered by a pair of F40 diesel engines as it makes its stop at Providence RI. Amfleet II food service car is directly behind loco.

We passed the old station at Stamford, where many ex-New Haven "Washboard" MUs are stored near the newer M-2 Cosmopolitan cars. Approaching New Rochelle we slowed down, crossed the multiple track line at Shell Tower Interlocking, and swung south on the Hell Gate Bridge Route while the commuter line into Grand Central heads east. Shortly we began the long climb to the Hell Gate Bridge, while on the right or west side a spectacular view of the New York skyline could be had. Near the top of Hell Gate you can see the vertical lift bridge in the distance that the Hudson, Harlem and New Haven lines enter Manhattan on for Grand Central. Going down the other side of the bridge approach you soon pass Sunnyside Yards on the right and the Long Island Rail Road junction before plunging into the darkness of the tunnel for Penn Station, where we arrived at 1:05pm, 10 minutes early.

The regular service trips leave Boston and New York at 7:45am and 7:40am respectively, arriving at the other ends at 11:40am and 11:35am respectively. Return trips from Boston and New York depart at 5pm and 4:49pm respectively, arriving at the other ends at 8:55 and 8:44pm. The fare is $45 each way, substantially more than the regular coach fare. The 3hr, 55min schedule appears easy to keep, and should be improved in the future to nearly 3½ hours. Downtown to downtown time should be competitive with the Air Shuttle, and service appears first rate, obviously geared to the expense account executive. It should be at least as successful as its counterpart in the southern half of the NE Corridor, the 2hr, 49min Express Metroliner schedule between New York and Washington DC.

CEREMONY LAUNCHES THE CRESCENT IN PICAYUNE

by Adron Hall

Picayune, Mississippi became an Amtrak stop on Oct 31, and Amtrak's CRESCENT stopped there that day at 8:40am northbound and 5:05pm southbound (scheduled at 4:29).

The official welcoming ceremony came the following day, Nov 1, when the city and Amtrak scheduled a ceremony to coincide with the arrival of the southbound CRESCENT. It began promptly at 4pm. Music and speeches were timed so the proceedings would climax with the arrival of the CRESCENT.

The clockwork-like events of the ceremony were as follows: Ribbon-cutting at the entrance to the facility by Mayor Greg Mitchell; music by Picayune High School band; introduction of 20 invited guests by chamber of commerce president; invocation by local minister; speeches by Mary Montgomery, local travel agent who will sell Amtrak tickets, and by local NARP member Adron Hall; special music by husband-wife duo ("Picayune Junction" to the tune of "Petticoat Junction"); speeches by the Mayor and Amtrak sales representative from New Orleans, Ms Sheila Ehland; arrival of the CRESCENT, breaking thru a banner lettered "Amtrak's CRESCENT Now Serves Picayune"; christening of engine 327 by Mayor's wife; presentation of engraved key to the city to Southern Railway engineer Happy Harrelson; train moved forward to load passengers; key to the city presented to SR conductor Henry "Gully" Vick; train departed to New Orleans as band played "Orange Blossom Special."

The new station facility now consists only of a platform beside the tracks with a ramp leading to it from the new city downtown parking lot. A gazebo-type building is to be constructed soon. The platform is unusual in that it is raised eight inches above the level of the tracks. This allows loading and unloading passengers without the use of a step box. Amtrak requested that this type of platform be built, but SR objected, wanting it level with the tracks. Just a couple of weeks before service was to begin at the site, SR relented and the higher-level platform was built, being finished at 5:30pm on Friday before the service was to begin on Sunday the 31st.

Promotion of the stop will be made by the local travel agent and travel agents on the Gulf Coast. Also, additional publicity will be forthcoming with Santa Claus arriving from the North Pole on the CRESCENT for the annual Christmas parade.

Consist of train 19 on Nov 1, the ceremonial day, was: engines 327, 262; cars 1237, 1623, 2451 "Birch Grove", 4005, 4019, 4017, 8512, 3108, 4738, 2981 "Pine Crest."

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from page 6)

SAN FRANCISCO COMMUTE train extension to the Ferry Building is now expected to be ready no later than Apr, 1983. The SP and the Port of San Francisco have both agreed to the plan.

MILWAUKEE ROAD COMMUTER train from Chicago to Walworth WI made its last run on Sep 30, leaving the line north of Fox Lake freight only.

RAILWAY PROGRESS INSTITUTE last month began a big campaign to bring rail transit to every major metropolitan area by the year 2000. The RPI is supported by 150 companies that sell rail equipment and supplies. Copies of their Rail Transit Program are available from: 700 N. Fairfax St, Alexandria VA 22314.

NEW YORK'S MTA on Nov 9 began finding in its turnstiles tokens minted for the Connecticut Turnpike, and obtainable in that state at only 17½¢, compared to the 75¢ MTA fare. While the minter tries to find a way to make the tokens non-interchangeable, the MTA is trying to apprehend and discourage illicit users.

(continued on page 19)

SILVER PALM

THE INAUGURAL RUN

by Jack M. Turner

Cross-Florida rail service returned to the Sunshine State on Saturday, Nov 20 after an absence of approximately 20 years. As the inaugural SILVER PALM rolled out of Tampa for Miami. It not only provided a new link in the Amtrak system, but also marked the first Amtrak-Florida DOT partnership in 403-b service.

Dedication ceremonies at Tampa's historic Union Station were kicked off by a jaza band from Busch Gardens' Dark Continent, and the Rough Riders, a local color guard. Dignitaries including Amtrak President Graham Claytor, Florida Transportation Secretary Paul Pappas, Tampa Mayor Bob Martinez, and House Transportation Committee Chairman Tom Gustafson followed with comments regarding the new train, and then President Claytor and Secretary Pappas unveiled SILVER PALM signs on the rear car. The ceremony was concluded with the traditional champagne christening by Secretary Pappas over the train's rear coupler.

A quick look at the train indicated an expanded consist for the inaugural run: F40 engine #386 with banners reading SILVER PALM and "November 20, 1982 Inaugural" beneath the Amtrak logo on the nose and a Florida DOT emblem above the banner. Next came Amfleet II coaches 25045, 25042, 25025, 25079, Amfleet II lounge 28012, and Amtrak business car 10,000. There actually were three signs on the rear platform of car 10,000--an Amtrak/FDOT sign flanked by a pair of signs, each bearing the words SILVER PALM with swaying palm trees and sleek-looking locomotive superimposed.

Departure came on time at 10:45am with approximately 200 aboard, including Dr. Charles Dunn, NARP President Jack Martin, Jim Herron and Barry Williams. Florida DOT's David Blodgett, who headed up the effort to implement the new train, was aboard, as were Amtrak officials Jim English, Bill Gallagher, Harry Stillwell, and District Supervisor Earl McClanahan.

The only real delay of the trip came entering Lakeland, as a six-minute hold was made for a red signal. Over 150 people greeted the SILVER PALM at Lakeland, with arrival at 11:30. During each of the eight scheduled intermediate stops, local dignitaries greeted the train with speeches, keys to the city, etc.

At Auburndale the train moved from the former ACL main line to the ex-SAL main. SCL personnel were on hand for the occasion to align the switches and speed up the train's passage over the lightly-used connector, located on the southwest side of Auburndale Junction. The northeast connector is the line used by the SILVER STAR's Miami section when combining with the St. Petersburg section.

Shortly, Winter Haven was reached and the Florida Citrus Queen boarded and gave out citrus products to several passengers. As scheduled, the northbound SILVER METEOR passed at West Lake Wales, answering the inevitable question of: "Why are we slowing down?" After stopping at Sebring, where the tracks run right down the center of a large orange grove, it was off on the arrow-straight racetrack leading to West Palm Beach.

The 103 miles were covered in 90 minutes with arrival on time at 2:40pm. West Palm Beach Mayor Eva Mack welcomed the new train, saying that she was a nervous flyer and would ride the train. With West Palm Beach being one of Florida's busiest destinations, the new train should be well-patronized at this location.

Stops at Delray and Deerfield Beach were punctuated by meets with the northbound SILVER STAR and southbound SILVER METEOR; then it was on to Fort Lauderdale and Hollywood, where Amtrak has traditionally been strong. Arrival at Miami's

attractive Hialeah Yard station came seven minutes early at 5:23pm. As the F40 broke thru a banner proclaiming "Miami Welcomes the SILVER PALM," the Carol City High School band broke into tune. Soon exotic dancers from Busch Gardens did a train-ride dance, including one dancer with a snake wrapped around her--a most unusual passenger!

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RIGHT: Amtrak newspaper ad for the new SILVER PALM service. The ad gives the train times at Tampa, Winter Haven and Miami and lists the 800 number to call for information. (Coaches are unreserved and there is no baggage checking.)

The SILVER PALM began revenue service the following day, Nov 21, with F40 engine #381, Amfleet II cars 25079, 28012, 25042, and private cars "Hampton Roads" (formerly Mr. Claytor's car at Southern Railway) and "Niagara", a car of unknown lineage. Once more the F40 bore the SILVER PALM sign and miniature U.S. and Florida flags, while the "Niagara" wore the signs on its rear platform.

After a brief sendoff by Mr. Claytor (who would return with his wife on the SILVER METEOR to Washington), and emceed by Wick Leatherwood, Amtrak Manager for State and Local Affairs, it was off to the north on the first revenue run of train 896. The coaches appeared about half-filled despite the fact that Miami-area advertising had yet to move into high gear. Gold Coast Railway Museum's steam engine met the train near Fort Lauderdale and welcomed the SILVER PALM with a whistle blast.

A handful of passengers detrained at Winter Haven and boarded the connecting bus to Cypress Gardens, Circus World, the Disney World area and Orlando. The trip from Miami to Winter Haven was reminiscent of the pre-Amtrak EAST COAST CHAMPION which departed Miami at 8:15am during the winter months after being routed off the strikebound Florida East Coast Railway. The similarity ended, however, at Auburndale where the SILVER PALM swung westward while the ghost of the EAST COAST CHAMPION swung easterly. Unlike inaugural run operations, the switches had to be thrown by the train crew, necessitating four brief stops, but soon it was back to mainline running for the final leg into Lakeland and Tampa. Near Ybor City the train was wyed and backed into Tampa's stub-end station, lining it up for the afternoon trip back to Miami. Arrival in Tampa came slightly ahead of the scheduled 1:15pm.

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Press coverage of the new train was extremely favorable, with many newspaper stories featuring the comfort of the wide coach seats and newness of the Amfleet II cars. The St. Petersburg Times also noted that the SILVER PALM allows passengers the chance to view some of the best and worst scenery in Florida--beautiful central Florida lakes and orange groves and Okeechobee-area scrub brush plus unsightly junkyards in southeast Florida. The author was quick to note the good scenery far outweighed the bad and, besides, it all represents the true Florida.

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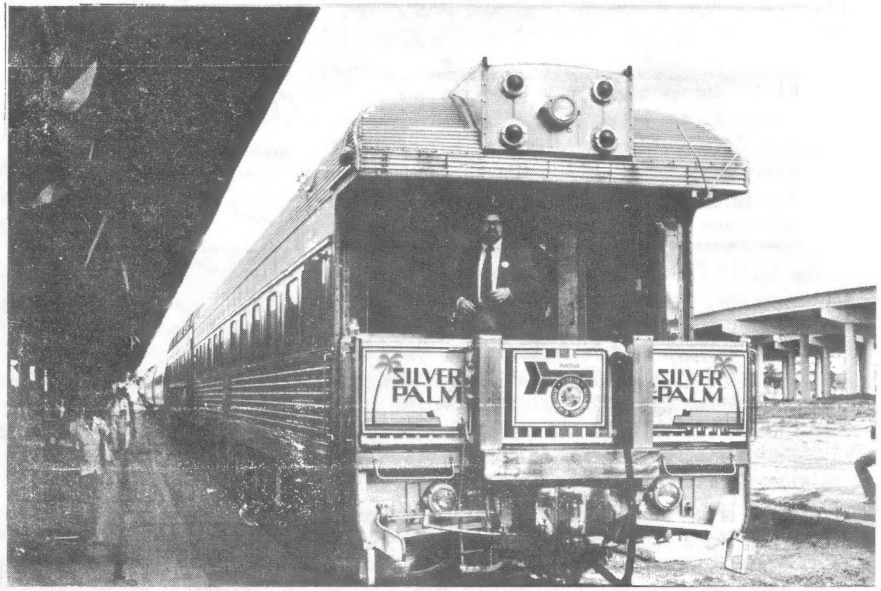
One of the unique features of this train is its connecting bus service which is the first such service attempted on the Florida route. Special buses link the SILVER PALM with Miami Beach and downtown Miami (via the Hollywood Amtrak station), Orlando and area attractions (via the Winter Haven station), and Clearwater and St. Petersburg Beach (via Tampa station).



NARP Director Jim Herron stands on the platform of private car "Niagara" as the first revenue run of the SILVER PALM arrives in Tampa, on Nov 21. Mr. Herron designed the "SILVER PALM" signs, and they were painted by F. R. Schwartz.

A $53 roundtrip ticket between Miami and Tampa is also good for bus passage to Miami Beach. However, the bus connection from Tampa to Clearwater or St. Petersburg Beach requires an additional charge. The $53 fare also is valid between Miami and Orlando using the train Miami to Winter Haven and bus Winter Haven to Orlando. Connecting bus passengers must have the appropriate SILVER PALM ticket before boarding the bus, as drivers cannot sell tickets or transport riders without a ticket or passenger receipt.

The buses will pick up and drop off passengers at most major hotels in downtown Miami, Miami Beach, Tampa Airport area, Clearwater Beach, St. Petersburg Beach, downtown Orlando, and Disney World area. To determine which hotels are serviced, passengers should contact Amtrak, the specific bus operator, or an Amtrak travel agent. Hotel pickup must be confirmed with the bus operator by 9pm (Eastern time) the day before pickup is to be made. Telephone numbers for the bus operators are: Miami Beach-Hollywood (305)871-4992 (American Sightseeing Tours); Tampa-Clearwater or St. Petersburg Beach (813)821-3747 in Clearwater/St. Pete or (813)228-9005 in Tampa (Gulf Coast Motor Line); and Winter Haven-Orlando (800)342-3526 (Elan Bus Company).

Bus schedules:

Lv	1:20 PM	Tampa Amtrak Station	Ar	4:15 PM
Ar	1:50 PM	St.Pete Amtrak Sta.	Lv	3:30 PM
Ar	1:55 PM	St.Pete-Downtown Hotels	Lv	3:25 PM
Ar	2:15 PM	St.Pete Beach Hotels	Lv	3:05 PM
Ar	2:30 PM	Treasure Island Hotels	Lv	2:55 PM
Ar	2:40 PM	Madeira Beach Hotels	Lv	2:50 PM
Ar	2:45 PM	Redington Beach Hotels	Lv	2:45 PM
Lv	1:20 PM	Tampa Amtrak Station	Ar	4:15 PM
Ar	1:30 PM	Tampa Airport Area Hotels	Lv	3:55 PM
Ar	2:00 PM	Clearwater Amtrak Station	Lv	3:35 PM
Ar	2:30 PM	Clearwater Beach Hotels	Lv	2:55 PM

* * *

Lv	3:00 PM	Route 50 West Hotel Area	Ar	2:00 PM
Lv	3:05 PM	Downtown Orlando Hotels	Ar	1:50 PM
Lv	3:15 PM	Orlando Amtrak Station	Ar	1:45 PM
Lv	3:30 PM	Florida Center Hotels	Ar	1:40 PM
Lv	3:40 PM	International Dr. Hotels	Ar	1:30 PM
Lv	3:55 PM	Lake Buena Vista Hotels	Ar	1:20 PM
Lv	4:05 PM	I-4/US 92 Hotel Area(East)	Ar	1:15 PM
Lv	4:10 PM	I-4/US 92 Hotel Area(West)	Ar	1:10 PM
Lv	4:30 PM	Circus World & Hotels	Ar	12:30 PM
Lv	5:00 PM	Cypress Gardens	Ar	12:05 PM
Ar	5:15 PM	Winter Haven Amtrak Sta.	Lv	11:50 AM

* * *

Lv	9:15 PM	Hollywood Amtrak Station	Ar	8:00 AM
Ar	9:30 PM	Sunny Isles Hotels	Lv	7:45 AM
Ar	9:45 PM	Surfside/Bal Harbor Hotels	Lv	7:30 AM
Ar	10:00 PM	North Miami Beach Hotels	Lv	7:15 AM
Ar	10:25 PM	Miami Beach Hotels	Lv	6:50 AM
Ar	10:45 PM	Downtown Miami Hotels	Lv	6:30 AM

Sketch used in preparing the SILVER PALM rear signs.

FURTHER REPORT ON THE SILVER PALM

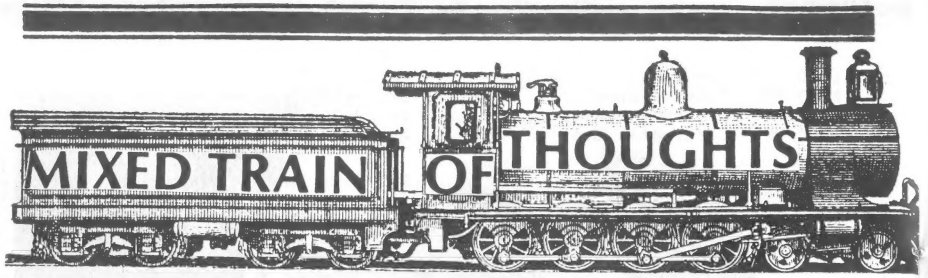
by Dr. Charles A. Dunn

The SILVER PALM accomplished the much talked about, said by many to be impossible, use of Auburndale Junction for passenger trains to get from one coast of Florida to the other. The journey thru Auburndale Junction went with ease, with track work and crossing rehabilitation having been completed only the day before. Switches are stil hand-thrown--as they are for the STAR, which goes thru the junction in the other direction, to Orlando.

The inaugural run was a railroader's heaven, with Amtrak and the Florida DOT pulling out all the stops for an occasion to be talked about for a lifetime. Initial ceremonies were at Tampa Union Station. Jim Herron, NARP Director, painted up a beautiful tail sign for car 10,000 and repainted the bumper blocks at the station--and lettered one for the SILVER PALM. Russ Schwartz made up the signs for the front of the engine. A large crowd was on hand to hear various dignitaries extole the virtues of passenger train travel. Included were Tampa Mayor Martinez, Florida DOT Secretary Pappas, Amtrak President Claytor, and newly named Florida House of Representatives Chairman of Transportation Committee Gustafson.

Florida's first 403-b has many unique characteristics--the first being that it is the first 403-b that is not fed, or does not feed, a long distance train; it is purely intrastate. Secondly, it has dedicated bus service at both end points and in the middle, at Winter Haven, serving various hotels and attractions in Miami, Orlando-Disney area, and Tampa-St. Pete area. The buses will meet all trains on arrival, and pick up passengers on an on-call basis from their hotels--a first for Amtrak.

Hats are off to Bruce Heard of Amtrak and Dave Blodgett of Florida DOT, who coordinated what has to be the finest inaugural to date, the first of many we hope to see in the future in Florida.



AMTRAK'S THANKSGIVING PATRONAGE was heavy, the corporation said. It counted 2849 standees on its trains over the 5-day period Nov 24-28, compared to 3800 last year on the Sunday after Thanksgiving Day alone. Amtrak said the number of standees was reduced by "careful planning" and "assignment of extra equipment to key heavy traffic areas". Many Amtrak employees also donated time to help guide crowds at various stations. Locally, we noted that train 711, the SAN JOAQUIN was carrying four cars and brought about 100 passengers into Oakland on Nov 28. The southbound COAST STARLIGHT that same date added three cars at Oakland for the holiday crowd, and over 100 passengers appeared to be boarding at San Jose. No. 11 totaled 14 cars including one baggage.....

THE NORTHEAST CORRIDOR had extra equipment added to Amtrak trains for the holiday. Bob Underwood was observing at New Haven on Nov 24, the day before Thanksgiving, and he noted examples of Corridor trains: Metroliner 293 (New England Express) with engines 309 (F40) and 497 (E8) back to back, followed by cars 28001 lounge, 21826, 21833, 21861, 21814, 21856, and 28000 lounge, with all cars open. Train 190, the BENJAMIN FRANKLIN came in with engine 967 and unloaded two mail containers from car 1369, which was followed by cars 20129, 21026, 21010, 21081, 21130, and 21050, all open, and followed by deadhead cars 20008, 21053, 21045, 21106, 21175, 20232, 20039, 21001, and 21164. The train left 35mins late. The COLONIAL, train 95, came in with engines 211 and 209, one baggage and 12 Amfleet cars, plus Amtrak business car 10,000. All cars were open and the train was on time. Three coaches and an Amcafe were thru cars to Newport News. The NEW ENGLAND ZIP, train 168, had one AEM-7 locomotive and 12 cars plus baggage on rear. The last five cars seemed to be deadheads, and the train was about 25mins late. The MINUTE MAN, #175, arrived on time with two F40 locos and 10 Amfleet cars, to which three more were added at New Haven. The YANKEE CLIPPER, #170 was 30mins late, with engine 212 and nine Amfleet cars. Mr. Underwood noted that in general all passengers were accommodated at that station; while trains from Boston were running on time, those coming north from New York were all late by 20-30 minutes.....

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LA JUNTA-DENVER LINE was the subject of comments by Amtrak's Jim Larsen, published in RTN 254. Mr. Larsen said that one track had been removed, and it is impractical to replace it. By way of correcting this information, Mike Blaszak writes: "This line is single track, and to my knowledge, always has been, between La Junta and Pueblo. For about 26 miles east of Pueblo the single track is shared by Santa Fe and Missouri Pacific. If the "MoP-UP" decision is upheld by the courts, Rio Grande trains will operate over this line as well. Santa Fe contended in the MoP-UP proceedings that this line is already congested; with Rio Grande putting traffic now routed UP or BN over it, congestion will doubtless increase. Between Pueblo and Denver the line is basically double track. One critical segment, tho, is single track--from the Palmer Lake summit to Crews, south of Colorado Springs. This resulted from Colorado Springs' desire to get rid of the Santa Fe-owned track thru town, which had numerous grade crossings and therefore was adjudged a traffic hazard. The three railroads involved decided to go along

with the city's wishes in 1971, just before the Colorado and Southern began developing the overhead coal traffic which now overtaxes the line. The Colorado legislature for the past several years has been kicking around the idea of building a new line to the east of the Front Range cities for coal traffic (partly following, as I understand it, the old C&S alignment), but has not acted on the idea for want of a politically-acceptable means for funding the plan. Barring construction of such a line, resumption of competitive passenger service on this line is not possible".....

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ANNUAL ARMY-NAVY GAME train is being run by Amtrak on Dec 4 from Washington to Philadelphia, where the train is parked adjacent to the football stadium. Washington departure is 7:10am for a 3-hour trip to Veterans Stadium. The return trip from Philly is immediately following the game's end.....

CONRAIL CREW TAKEOVERS by Amtrak in the Northeast Corridor moved ahead another step on Nov 22 when the General Chairman for the United Transportation Union's New York-Boston and New Haven-Springfield routes signed the UTU agreement with Amtrak.....

"TRI-STATE LIFESAVER EXPRESS" is the name of a special train running Dec 1 in the three New England states of Connecticut, Rhode Island and Massachusetts to call attention to Operation Lifesaver, a nationwide effort to reduce highway grade crossing accidents. The states will proclaim the week of Dec 6 as Operation Lifesaver Week", and will sign the proclamation aboard the special train.....

AMTRAK'S OCTOBER PERFORMANCE figures announced by the corporation in late November were an on-time performance of 85.4% systemwide; a dining and buffet deficit that was 21% improved over Oct 1981, and "essentially on target"; and the fact that Amtrak reservation-sales offices handled over 95% of all calls--most of them in 20 seconds or less from the time a caller connected.....

MERCHANDISERS AND ADVERTISERS have discovered that the American public not only has a love affair with the passenger train, but also responds reliably to the use of trains in advertising. The example shown here is from Macy's, which was advertising in early November a sale of Persian rugs, dubbed as the "Return of the Orient Express." The sale, and the train graphics, appear periodically in Macy ads.....

THE ADIRONDACK RAILWAY line could still be saved, altho the state of New York on Nov 16 announced that it had rejected one plan to take over the route. An application by Adirondack Rails, Inc. to rehabilitate and operate the state-owned rail line between Remsen and Lake Placid was rejected, the NY DOT said, because the potential operator's "projected levels of revenue, operating expenses and rehabilitation costs are unrealistic." DOT said it was "not in the public interest for the state to encourage a venture having so high a probability of failure." The state still must go thru a court case in January, brought by the Adirondack Railway Corporation, which claims it still has valid interest in the line. The DOT said it rejected the latest application "with great reluctance in view of the DOT's extraordinary effort to reactivate rail operations on the line." If a "firm commitment for $3.2 million in rehabilitation funding and a viable operating plan" are put forward, the DOT will consider it before it is forced to turn the rails into scrap and transfer the land to the Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Adirondack Rails Inc. was a group of potential private investors headed by Dr. Ronald J. Goldstone...

SEVEN DOME CARS being converted to head-end power for use on the CAPITOL LTD and CITY OF NEW ORLEANS will be numbered 9400-9406 when they emerge from Beech Grove.....

A TIMETABLE CHANGE that did not make it into the Amtrak Oct 31 system timetable: train 96, the TIDEWATER, now runs on Fridays as well as Sundays. Thus there are now two trains out of Newport News on Fridays. The added train is an attempt to get Navy personnel in the Newport News/Norfolk area to use Amtrak to Washington and New York for the weekend. Extra equipment deadheads to Newport News on train 95, the COLONIAL, on Thursday evenings.....

VIA RAIL CANADA is converting its Tempo passenger fleet as well as the three Tempo baggage-power cars from 570 volts to 480 volts head-end power so the cars will be compatible with Amtrak equipment and can be mixed with Amfleet cars on the MAPLE LEAF and INTERNATIONAL.....

AN INTERNATIONAL UPDATE: A CN freight derailment at Petrolia, Ontario early on Nov 12 closed the line between London and Sarnia, and passengers were bused between those points. The westbound INTERNATIONAL was turned back at London, and passengers were bused to Port Huron, after being told that there would be a train there. Of course there was no train, and Amtrak arranged for buses to Chicago. The buses left Port Huron at 1:30pm and arrived Chicago at 8:15pm. The poor handling of this situation was reportedly due largely to the inability of the agents in Port Huron and Flint to cope with the problem. Amtrak provided no food for the bused passengers, in spite of pleas from most of the affected passengers. Finally the bus driver on his own initiative stopped at a McDonald's in Battle Creek. Nevertheless, passengers went without food until 5:30pm. Those waiting in Chicago for arriving passengers were not told about the busing, but were told that the train would arrive on time at 6:02pm. At about 6:30pm it was announced that the train had arrived and passengers were in the station. Only after 7pm was the busing announced, but no predicted arrival time was given. Passengers on the bus were not allowed by Amtrak to call ahead to those meeting them. The eastbound INTERNATIONAL was annulled at Port Huron (report by Duane W. Roller).....

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SILVER PALM POSTSCRIPT: The Tampa Tribune reported that on Nov 21, the first day of revenue operation, the SILVER PALM leaving Tampa was operated by supervisory personnel after the engineer and fireman refused to cross a picket line that was set up by SCL employees who objected to Amtrak's hiring non-SCL personnel (non-unionized) to inspect and clean the train. The train uses two carmen (inspectors) and three coach cleaners. SCL said that Amtrak had the option of hiring SCL personnel or its own employees. The SCL then suspended 10-12 employees, including the pickets and the engineer and fireman, pending a hearing on the dispute.....

FIVE ICG EMPLOYEES were fired by the railroad this month; they were the crew of the freight train that derailed in Livingston LA on Sep 28 (see RTN 253) in the state's worst rail disaster. The five included a woman clerk who was at the controls of the train at the time, a violation of rules. The clerk testified that the engineer was too drunk to operate the train safely. The engineer had been fired for drinking on a previous occasion, but had been rehired. The railroad said that the accident was not the fault of the crew, however, but was due to a broken wheel part on one freight car.....

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS' meeting of Amtrak will be held next on Dec 1 at Washington headquarters.....

SOUTHERN MONTANA TEST train ran the route of the NORTH COAST HIAWATHA from Fargo ND to Spokane starting on Nov 9 on concluding on Nov 11. Sen John Melcher of Montana and Amtrak officials were aboard the train, which consisted of F40 engine 361 and four Superliner cars. With snow on the ground, crowds gave the train an enthusiastic reception. In Billings 40 people met the train; in Livingston, 107; in Bozeman, 75; in Butte, 500; in Helena, 110; and in Missoula, 240. Amtrak's Jim Larsen, who was aboard, told the press that the track was in excellent condition--the best it's ever been. The trip drew quite a bit of reportage

in the media.....

TIMETABLE ERRORS & OMISSIONS: In the Oct 31 Amtrak system timetable, on page 36 the Chicago Service at a Glance section shows the CARDINAL, train 50, leaving Chicago at the wrong hour--9:10am instead of 8:10am. The section also omits noting the fact of tri-weekly operation for the CARDINAL and EAGLE. On page 34 the days of operation are not shown along the columns for the CARDINAL, as they are for the EAGLE and SUNSET LIMITED. On page 22, Narbeth and Radnor PA are still listed, even tho they have no 600-series or other Amtrak service.....

TWIN-UNIT DINERS, Amtrak cars 8800-8801 and 8804-8805 were spotted in BN's Northtown (Minneapolis) yard on Nov 28, enroute from Seattle to an unknown consignee in St. Louis. The cars evidently have been sold by Amtrak.....

FLORIDA BULLET TRAIN initial report from the Japanese engineers studying it is due to be completed in about four months. Meanwhile, the state's DOT is drafting legislation that would draw up a commission with powers to facilitate construction of the proposed Tampa-Orlando-Miami high-speed train line. However, the Florida High Speed Rail Committee is having second thoughts about asking for waivers of state environmental laws for the project (as means of speeding up its construction), after the uproar in California when its Bullet Train project achieved such waivers. The backers face a dilemma: they want to expedite the project, but do not want to flaunt environmental laws. However, doing all the environmental studies would delay the project from 5 to 10 years more, they calculate.....

JAPANESE POSTAGE STAMPS shown here were issued on Nov 15 to call attention to the opening of the Joetsu Bullet Train line. Second stamp pictures an early electric locomotive, the ED16 type. A postal issue was also done for the Jun 23 opening of the Tohoku line (see RTN #249).....

CALIFORNIA BULLET TRAIN'S engineering and construction will be overseen by the Fluor Corporation of Irvine CA, according to a Nov 17 announcement by American High Speed Rail Corporation. The corporation that day signed a "multi-million dollar" contract with Fluor for the project. The precise routing of the line has not been decided upon yet, according to reports, but American High Speed Rail did announce on Nov 11 that it will not use the existing rail right-of-way between Los Angeles and Santa Ana to avoid a conflict with Amtrak.....

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PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL COMMENTATOR John Madden, who is a frequent train rider, was spotted on Oct 17 on train 49, the LAKE SHORE LIMITED, by reader J. Thomas O'Connor. Madden told O'Connor that he had missed the train's departure at Grand Central Terminal, so tried Croton-Harmon and Poughkeepsie in a CBS limousine, and finally decided to beat it up the thruway to Albany-Rensselaer, where he was able to board before the 10:10pm departure time.....

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS assumed management control of the Transportation Test Center near Pueblo, Colorado last month. The TTC was established in 1971 by the Federal RR Administration. In early 1981 the FRA Administrator recommended that the center be operated and managed by the private sector.....

SPIRIT OF CALIFORNIA is doing very nicely. It had a record ridership of 916 (both trains) on the day before Thanksgiving. Rumors that it is in financial trouble appeared to stem mainly from a UPI release (which we saw in the Berkeley Gazette of Nov 22) which claimed the train had "fallen on hard times." The UPI reporter had interviewed Caltrans's Warren Weber and represented himself as a pro-passenger train person. But when the article came out, all the positive things had been cut out and the negative things left in, according to a Caltrans source. After the article appeared, the Southern Pacific's Bradshaw wrote to UPI expressing his pleasure with the article. Had SP been behind the whole affair? Who knows? "Someone's doing a hatchet job" on the train, said Caltrans.....

THE SUNSET LIMITED, train no. 2, that left L.A. on Nov 12 was blocked by an SP freight derailment between Indio and Yuma CA. The SUNSET detoured on the Santa Fe between West Colton CA and Phoenix AZ, leaving W. Colton at 6:50am on the 13th and arriving Phoenix at 6:50pm. The SP freight derailment was described by the L.A. Times as compressing 22 rail cars to the size of eight.....

ORANGE BLOSSOM SPECIAL was a luxury passenger train that ran until the 1950s. But on Nov 16 the Seaboard ran a new freight train carrying fruit from Florida on the old route of the passenger train for the first time, to Wilmington DE.....

SUPERLINER SLEEPER 32039 cannot be destroyed as scrap yet, a federal court told Amtrak in late October. The car was next to the one that was destroyed by fire in the Jun 23 fire on the COAST STARLIGHT (see RTN 247). Amtrak was going to scrap the car on Nov 1 and use the $26,000 worth of spare parts in it for other cars. But an attorney for the man who died in the blaze demanded that the car be kept for evidence, reported the Seattle Times. Amtrak and SP have been sued by relatives of the deceased man, who had been an employee of the Seattle Times. The newspaper also reported that the four persons who had occupied the sleeping compartment where the fire allegedly started were Ken Clausen, Amtrak regional director in Seattle; Robert Lamberson, an Assistant Supervisor for Amtrak in Seattle; Ted Wilkens, described as a quality assurance specialist in the private sector, and an "unknown gentleman from the National Association of Railroad Passengers".....

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CAR-GO-RAIL CORPORATION and Amtrak entered into a service agreement last month, by which each promotes the other's service. Car-Go-Rail, of Orlando FL, carries automobiles between Northeast and Florida points, using freight trains and trucks. A 30-day advance reservation is required of Car-Go-Rail. The national phone number is 800-327-5353; in New York it is 212-307-1080; in Florida, 800-432-9989.....

RENO FUN TRAIN will have its first departure of the season from Oakland CA on Feb 4, 1983. American Rail Tours is taking reservations.....

TWO AMTRAK TRAINS from Boston that had been unloaded were being coupled on track 11 in New York's Penn Station at 12:50pm on Nov 10, and the coupling movement was too heavy, resulting in a derailment of cars. Six on-board snack bar workers were reported injured--all Boston-based crew.....

OLD L&N DEPOT in Pensacola FL is being restored to its original condition and a 15-story Hilton hotel built alongside it. Ground was broken recently for the project by L&N Associates. The depot is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1913.....

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THE AMTRAK BOARD of Directors was taking up at its Dec 1 meeting the question of approving funds to rebuild into head-end power cars 43 conventional steam-powered cars. Six of these are Hi-level diners that would be rebuilt into diner-lounges for use on the DESERT WIND and the PIONEER. Such requests are usually approved by the Board.....

A NEW TIMETABLE of "California Intercity Rail Services" has come out of Caltrans and may be available in at least some Amtrak stations. The folder, printed in blue and bearing a Rich Tolmach drawing of an Amfleet train at night under skylines of San Diego and L.A., is one of the most readable and graphically eye-catching of RR timetables we've ever seen, and deserves study by timetable makers. It lists all the Caltrans and Amtrak bus connections, including the "secret" Glendale-Pasadena-Pomona-San Bernardino bus of Caltrans'.....

"SURVIVAL OF COMMUTER RAIL" is at stake in the Philadelphia dispute. SEPTA is to take over Conrail commuter operations there Jan 1, but the two sides are far apart in management-labor talks.....

SACRAMENTO CITY REDEVELOPMENT Agency wants to abandon the SP/Amtrak depot there and build a new multi-modal transportation center. There is citizen opposition.....

THE MASSACHUSETTS DOT has a plan for reviving NY-Cape Code rail passenger service presented to the state's Congressional delegation on Nov 5.....

URBAN-SUBURBAN TRANSIT (continued from page 9)

CONRAIL NEW HAVEN line is under a 55mph speed limit, and two inspection stops are being made per trip, under orders from the FRA, because of the hazard of wheels falling off the new M-2 commuter cars. Axles are being replaced, but the job will take about nine months. The FRA order came on Nov 11. The previous week a wheel fell from a morning train in the New Rochelle station. There were no injuries in that mishap, the second in seven months.

SOUTH SHORE LINE'S new commuter cars went into service in Chicago Nov 22 and attracted almost double the normal number of riders the first day.

IRT SUBWAY TRAIN derailed on NY's Upper West Side Nov 9, injuring six and causing thousands of passengers to be stranded in the subway. A motor mount broke, dropping the motor to the ground--a mystery problem which has cropped up five times in the past two years.

CARS & CONSISTS

*CRESCENT, train 20, Atlanta Oct 24: engines 327, 259; cars 1246, 1621, 4733, 4728, 4632, 4636, 4630, 3107, 8511, 2465, 2994, SR business car #3.

*Ferrocarriles de Costa Rica (FECOSA) train 3 (formerly Ferrocarriles Electrico al Pacifico), San Jose-Punta Arenas, Oct 26: engine 130 (electric); cars 202 equipaje, coaches 98, 97, 52 (first class), 65.

*BROADWAY/CAPITOL LTD, train 41/441, Pittsburgh Nov 9: engines 336, 318; cars 1135, 1152, (CAPITOL section: 1237, 1365, 2992 "Pine Peak", 25076), 8517, 3124 "Betsy Ross", 25064, 25069, 2080, 2933 "Pacific Skies", 4622 deadhead, 1623, 21212 deadhead.

*HOOSIER STATE, train 317, Crawfordsville IN, Nov 20: engine 313; cars deadhead Superliner 32052, wheel cars 10401, 10400, Amfleet cars 20017, 21203, 21827, private car NYC 48.

*Conway Scenic Railroad special train for Tourist Rwy Assoc, North Conway NH Nov 5-7: engine 1055 (Alco S-4 ex-Portland ME Terminal; coaches 1140 & 1133 ex-CNJ, open coach 155 ex-MEC, parlor obs "Gertrude Emma".

*"Autumn Leaves Special" Atlanta-Chattanooga RT, Oct 30: engine NKP 765 & tender, aux. tender SR WT 53; cars combine SR 726 "Man O' War", coaches SR 661, Tenn. Valley 907, SR 841, 844, 843, 842, 845; commissary car CofG 405; coaches Old Dominion NRHS 706, SR 1086, 1067, CNO&TP 3659, SR 1068, 1087, 1081, 1035 "W. Graham Claytor, Jr."

QUOTES OF THE WEEK***

"As the Silver Palm left its last stop in Hollywood, a worn (Amtrak President) Claytor sat alone on the back of the train, his silver hair tousled by the wind. Unruffled, the patrician corporate president--a former Secretary of the Navy--seemed lost in the world of the lonesome whistle call. Said his wife, Fran: 'I've got so many photos of him like that--it's his favorite place.'"

--Tim Smart in Miami Herald, Nov 21.

SLIP OF THE MONTH CLUB***

"Using cranes and other heavy equipment, work crews attempted to reopen a Southern Pacific Railroad line blocked by 15 derailed freight cars yesterday...

"The engines and most of the other cars in the northbound train remained on the tracks, officials said."

--UPI release in San Francisco Chronicle, Nov 12.

(And what happened to the rest of the other cars?)

Do your friends a favor–tell them about Accent on Travel!

Amtrak award

TED AND SYLVIA BLISHAK, OWNERS OF ACCENT ON TRAVEL, HAVE RECEIVED AMTRAK'S GOLDEN SPIKE AWARD FOR PRODUCING MORE RAIL SALES THAN ANY OTHER AGENCY IN THE PENINSULA-SANTA CLARA VALLEY AREA.

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"ISSUES IN AMERICAN RAIL TRAVEL", RTN's little book on important problems with America's rail passenger revival, is almost ready for publication. Price will be $4.50, which includes relevant tax & postage. Full details will be given later in RTN. Rail Travel News, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RTN ADVERTISING RATES: Express Ads $1 per line of 80 spaces. Display ads: only $1.25 per square inch. RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

RAIL FANTRIPS

Dec 4: Private car Lehigh Valley 353 NY-Albany/Rensselaer RT on rear of ADIRONDACK & MAPLE LEAF. Lehigh Black Diamond Ltd, Box 353, Syracuse NY 13201. Info received too late for timely inclusion.

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One Rail Fantrips listing is free. Send full info to: RAIL TRAVEL NEWS, Fantrips Dept, PO Box 9007, Berkeley CA 94709.

TWENTY SEVEN-ELEVEN: Pasco to Frisco by train

by Glenn Lee

Part Two - Conclusion

At 7:57am we pulled to a halt at Portland Union Station. I looked as hard as I could, but nowhere in sight was the long line of yellow, red and black-roof cars I had expected over the years at this time of day. No SHASTA DAYLIGHT anywhere. Instead, there was a 3-car MOUNT RAINIER preparing to depart northbound, locomotive 216 pulling Superliners 34100, 34019 and 34051. It literally sneaked away unnoticed by anyone I could tell.

I sat for a few moments in the great waiting room, recently enhanced by overhead rotating fans, donated, as the sign on the lobby wall said, by the Casablanca Fan Co. in Pasadena. Life imitates art as Humphrey Bogart becomes more of a cult legend.

I used to feel that Portland was a blotto place--a depressing, dilapidated area where one endured time between trains as best as possible. All that has changed in recent years, with the city appearing and feeling more exuberant and peppy than ever. It was time to look around.

One place to check is the great Meier & Frank department store downtown. If "Miracle on 34th Street" ever is refilmed, it should be at M&F. One almost can expect Rosalind Russell to appear behind any of the counters from her famous scene in "Auntie Mame" where she tries (at Christmas) to sell everything C.O.D. as she hadn't learned any other way to ring up a sale.

Altho the merchandise is up to date, and even tho the manual elevators are long gone, it will always be 1927 at Meier & Frank. With not too much energy, you can almost hear the air compressors of the vanished streetcars outside on Alder St., and smell the rattan. Soon the picture will improve, as the Portland-Gresham light rail line will be running on Morrison St. outside M&F's south flank.

Lunch was at the Grotto, S.W. Stark and 10th Sts., where you get Fisherman's Wharf food and atmosphere without the mega-pricey gouging. And it was a leisurely walk back to the depot to wait for the COAST STARLIGHT north, and then the COAST STARLIGHT south--both 9-car trains.

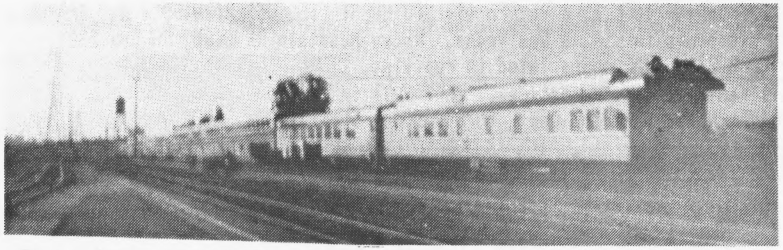
Due in at 2:15pm, the northbound STARLIGHT arrived about 1:50. It included locomotives 237 and 229; and cars 1204, 39917, 31031, 34077, 34080, 33004 lounge, 38017 diner, and 32035 & 32041 sleepers. It pulled away at 2:30pm on time, for Seattle.

My southbound COAST STARLIGHT No. 11 pulled in at 2:50pm, 10 minutes early on its scheduled 3pm arrival. It included locomotives 289 and 241; and cars 1138, 39913, 31040, 31036, 34059, 33010 lounge, 38016 diner, and sleepers 32016 and 32055. Departure was 3:30pm on time. The train was not crowded, having only about 100 coach passengers, compared to 500 or more who pile aboard in the summer rush period.

Just east of the Steel Bridge in downtown Portland we noted an incoming UP freight with a lashup of UP, N&W and SP locomotives. The day was extremely clear. To the east Mount Hood glistened like a big ice cream sundae. All it needed was a little chocolate syrup and a cherry on top to make the montage complete. Stunning.

At 3:48pm we were thru Oregon City, which looks very much like a West Virginia mill community, or perhaps a little like Glassport PA, where I visited once long ago on board the Pittsburgh Railways' old No.98 -Glassport streetcar. The simile is good, as one block from the SP track once rolled the Portland Traction streetcar route from downtown Portland, past the old brick store buildings on single track that easily could have been located anywhere between Trafford City and Johnstown PA. There was a fair amount of water passing over the falls a few blocks beyond, and then much beautiful backlit scenery as we passed along the lake above the falls. Mellow, mellow. What a day!

Passengers craned to look for the great golden statue atop the Oregon Capitol Building a few blocks from the tracks in downtown Salem. Locally it's known as "Golden Boy," an interesting sight just before we stopped at 4:25pm to pick up a small crowd. Out at 4:30pm on time, and then a major surprise: the crew were handing out dinner reservations. Something truly remarkable has happened to the STARLIGHT! I selected a 7:30 pm sitting. Phasing out the long and irritating dinner lines is bound to win Amtrak a lot of friends. At 4:52pm we were zipping along I-5 north of Albany. It would have been fast-



The southbound COAST STARLIGHT at San Jose. On this occasion, two SP office cars were hitching a ride on the rear. Photo by Gene Hines.

er in years past when 79mph was the limit here. Now it's 70mph, one of the SP's little tricks to stick pins into the passenger servic

It is here that one can expect to hear some one point at I-5 and say: "Isn't it wonderful that the freeways were built before inflation became so bad!" Don't fall for this bait. Reply instead that it was precisely the construction of large public works projects like the Interstate highways that accelerated inflation, and also use of oil products--two situations that have seriously crippled the strength of the American democracy.

We arrived Albany at 4:58pm and departed at 5pm on time. To the east, more of the great Cascade volcanoes such as Mt. Jefferson were visible. A warm north wind kept the atmosphere very clear. One of the best days of the year. Anyone who can should wait until fall to travel. At 5:25pm we crossed the Willamette River, just east of the Oregon Electric (now BN) bridge which for years has sported a lift span over the dry land of a gravel bar in what used to be the old navigation channel. I wondered how long that will last.

The STARLIGHT was into Eugene 5:42pm, three minutes early, and picked up a good crowd of passengers. This is one of the STARLIGHT's better stops, as it offers good overnight service both ways to the Bay Area, something that is of increasing importance as air service continues to deteriorate to intermediate-size and smaller communities. And yet it isn't difficult to remember that in 1967 the Eugene Chamber of Commerce SUPPORTED the SP's application to discontinue the SHASTA DAYLIGHT.

We departed Eugene 5:52pm on time, and an air of great relaxation seemed to fall over the train as we turned east and headed for the foothills of the Cascades. An air of expectancy. Perhaps we'd be able to see some of the mountains before darkness closed about us. By 6:10pm we were on the line built to bypass Lookout Point Dam in the early 1950s. This is the old "Natron Cutoff" by which SP greatly speeded rail service in the mid-1920s. Before the opening of the line between Klamath Falls and Natron, south of Eugene, ocean-going passenger ships such as the "H. F. Alexander" and the "Ruth Alexander" were faster between Seattle and San Francisco than SP-NP passenger rail service. Hard to believe, but true. SP tracks had reached Klamath Falls from the south by 1915, but the gap to Eugene could not be closed until after World War I. And this evening, we'd be traveling on the cutoff that made the modern day SHASTA DAYLIGHT and CASCADE runs possible --and our own COAST STARLIGHT.

This is the time of day one is certain that the STARLIGHT desperately needs a dome car. Something above the roof line of the cars for all-around vision. The glass in the Sightseer car is too far from the eyes to be of any use in REAL sightseeing. My guess is that Amtrak would be both wise and money ahead to convert some of the old cars now set for sale to crew dormitory cars, and then convert the former Santa Fe stepdown cars to full seating once again. Ahead of each stepdown car, and behind the converted crew-dormitory cars should be operated one or two dome coaches, a dome sleeping car, and a 10-6 sleeper.

Things aren't good in Oregon, as long lines of empty box cars on the sidings easily testify. Many empties are stored at Dexter, which we passed at 6:16pm. One can only wonder if the Oregon timber communities will sometime go the way of the Colorado mining communities after the demonitization of silver in 1893. At 6:20pm we passed Lookout Point Dam, an important key to flood control in the Willamette Valley, and also an important producer of hydroelectric power. We passed Hampton at 6:33, and if you look carefully here you can see the old rail right-of-way disappearing into the reservoir's upstream end. At 6:44pm into Oakridge at the foot of the big hill. Long lines of empty RBOX freight cars lined both sides of the main line. At 7:20pm we crossed the main highway on the big trestle at the foot of the long S curve below Wicopee, and now it's a slow trudge to the summit of Willamette Pass--"Cascade Summit" on the railroad.

Flying saucer-shaped clouds in the Cascades of Oregon, photographed thru a window of the STARLIGHT. RTN photo.

It's almost dark, and now time for my reserved 7:30pm dinner. Interesting conversation. Two at my table had traveled aboard the "Cunard Princess" on the Alaska cruise run, and found it not to their liking. Dirty, lackluster crew. Added weight to an argument I'd heard recently that the ship will be sold when a new Cunard vessel, ordered this summer from the yards, is delivered in a few years.

We passed the summit in darkness about 8:20pm. Passing back to my coach, I noted that the Sightseer lounge was filled with much cigarette smoke, and also with loud, raucous rock music from a stony-faced young man's portable radio--music that continued despite a crew order to tone it down. No wonder they go deaf. We stopped at Chemult at 8:47, and it is here that the young man should have been put off the train, as a gesture of good will to all the others on board. We took a number of passengers in the blackness, and whistled off at 8:40pm, four minutes late.

Our arrival at Klamath Falls was 10pm, and departure 10:15pm on time. I had a chance to walk the platform, and "case" the depot, one of the more intriguing small depots SP built in the Northwest. After departure, I sat for 20 minutes in the Sightseer car. It rode very well, and reminded me of traveling in Great Northern's Great Dome on the EMPIRE BUILDER in better times across Eastern Washington at night into Spokane. It creates a feeling of relaxed well-being.

At 10:41pm we passed thru the short tunnel and into Dorris CA. I had now been in California almost two full minutes and had not yet got the bends.

At 11:30pm I pulled the window curtain next to me over my head and peered out at Mount Shasta, an eery sight in the dark of the moon. Strange cloud formations snaked over the area north of the mountain at a constant level, giving the impression of ash clouds (I may have lived downwind from Mount St. Helens a little too long, perhaps). You never can tell, as the U.S. Geological Service recorded a 4.5 Richter earthquake under Mount Shasta on Aug 1, 1978, and several aftershocks in the following days. Another 4.5 Richter quake struck the mountain 11:43pm June 20 this year, and was widely felt in Shasta and Siskiyou Counties. The mountain last erupted 200 years ago, and much of the SP line in the area is built on deposits remaining from pyroclastic flows and glowing avalanches from both near and distant past. Shasta continues to be classified as an active volcano by geologists, and alarming news is that some geothermal areas south and southeast of Mount Shasta are continuing to "heat up."

What made the sight of the darkened mountain more of an eye-opener, even at midnight, was a series of massive flashes of light behind the mountain from my point of view, as if an extensive lightning storm was in progress between the summit and Mount Lassen. And yet the sky was clear, except for the strange clouds.

Some cult groups believe the mountain covers subterranean cities named Iletheleme and Yaktayvia. Occupants share the mountain with other strange creatures called Lemurians, Atlanteans and lost tribes. Perhaps some of the above-listed were busy that night as my STARLIGHT passed by. I will never know.

At 11:46pm we entered a siding for a meet with an uphill, northbound freight, which roared by at 11:50pm. After that I was sound asleep, dreaming perhaps of SHASTA DAYLIGHTS and Yaktayvians.

At 7:30am a voice said: "Look--a BART train." It was Richmond, Calif. I got myself together and piled off at 7:55am on time in Oakland.

It was a cool Bay Area morning. Inside the Great Stone Depot at Oakland-16th St. loomed the massive old SP insignia "Southern Pacific Lines" with tracks disappearing into the sunset. If "The Octopus" ever is filmed again, that insignia would be a good set prop, I thought. It also might make a nice bit of artwork if Forbes Magazine runs another "Is This Railroad DOOMED?" article. In that, SP is getting what it richly has deserved for many years.

I scanned the lovely fading murals on the walls before stepping outside. A few blocks away on the elevated Nimitz Freeway, an oil spill was fouling the morning commute madness. A tractor dragged across my range of vision a short train of old baggage carts. Déja vu. Had these been the same carts I had seen dragged aboard the great steam ferries such as the "Eureka" and the "San Leandro" at the Oakland Mole long ago? I felt certain they were. Seemingly they are ready to roll on forever like the Mississippi.